

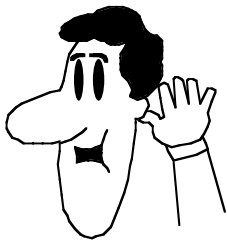


About Hearing Loss

Audiology Clinic

Hearing Loss

Most people lose their hearing from either loud noises or getting older. Some ways to tell if you are losing your hearing are:



- Turning the TV or radio on “too loud” and having someone tell you to “turn it down”.
- You cannot hear what another person is saying to you in a moderately loud place.
- You ask people to speak up or to repeat themselves often.
- Friends or family members tell you that they think you may have a hearing problem.

A way to find out whether you might be losing your hearing is to have a hearing test by an **audiologist (aw dee ol o jist)**. A hearing test is a good way to find out what sounds you cannot hear. If you have a medical problem, the audiologist may recommend you see an Ear, Nose, Throat physician (otologist).

Even though a lot of people lose their hearing from loud noises or with age, some people may have hearing loss that is brief and treatable. This brief hearing loss may occur when the ear becomes full of wax, the eardrum has a hole or tear, or with an ear infection.

How Can I Lose My Hearing?

The most common kind of hearing loss happens when a person's ears are exposed to loud noises for a long period of time. Sometimes, this kind of hearing loss can also occur during shorter exposure to the same high noises. The hearing loss that results is caused by damage to small hair cells or small nerves that are found deep within the ear. This hearing loss is often permanent and is called “**nerve deafness**”.

What Noises Can Damage My Hearing?

Damage to areas deep within the ear can occur from long exposures to loud noises such as loud music or loud machinery. Any time you have been around a noise that seems to have decreased your hearing or caused ringing (tinnitus) or pain in your ear, you may have been around unsafe levels of noise. Some other examples of unsafe noises are:

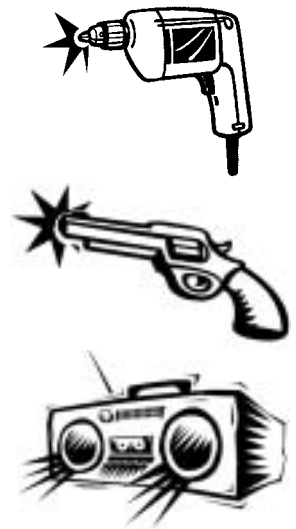


- Power equipment (drills, saws, sanders, air operated devices)
- Vehicles or machinery (motorcycles, aircraft, engines, tractors, motorboats, snowmobiles)
- Rifle, shotgun, artillery, explosive devices
- Loud music
- Work in noisy places (logging, machinist, construction work, millwork, factories, auto body repair)

What Can I Do To Protect My Hearing?

If you think you are in a high noise work area or use other noisy equipment, you **should always wear hearing protection.**

Ear plugs and earmuffs can help to decrease the loud noises that travel into your ears. You can get them from industrial suppliers, drug stores, retail stores and where guns are sold. If you work in high noise areas, ask your manager for hearing protection and about your company's hearing conservation program. By limiting the loud noises to your ears, you decrease the chance of causing damage to your hearing.



What Can Also Cause Hearing Loss?

- Aging
- Infections and decreased blood flow deep within the ear
- Head trauma or nerve diseases
- Medications (ask your doctor)

If you have:

extreme dizziness, ear drainage, ear pain, or hearing loss on one side of the head, you should tell your health care provider.

You can get more facts about hearing aids and hearing protection from the Audiology Clinic at the Portland VAMC.